WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. Apparatus for obtaining endoluminal access, the apparatus comprising:

an elongate body having a working axis and a distal region, the elongate body configured for insertion within a body lumen; and

at least one articulating element disposed near or at the distal region of the elongate body,

wherein the articulating element is configured to articulate off-axis from the working axis of the elongate body.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the articulating element comprises a visualization element configured to image within a body lumen.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the articulating element comprises the distal region of a lumen extending through the elongate body.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the apparatus has a delivery configuration in which the articulating element is aligned with or adjacent to the working axis of the elongate body, and a deployed configuration wherein the articulating element is articulated off-axis from the working axis of the elongate body.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the articulating element further comprises at least two articulating elements.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the at least two articulating elements are configured for independent off-axis articulation.

7. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the at least two articulating elements are configured for coordinated off-axis articulation.

8. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the at least two articulating elements comprise at least two visualization elements configured to provide stereoscopic visualization.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein a focal depth of the at least two visualization elements may be altered by altering a relative angle between the at least two visualization elements.

10. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the visualization element comprises a fiber optic visualization element.

11. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the visualization element comprises a video chip coupled to a signal-processing unit.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the video chip comprises an image sensor.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the image sensor is chosen from the group consisting of charge coupled device (CCD) image sensors, complementary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS) image sensors, multi-layer solid state image sensors, direct image sensors, and combinations thereof.

14. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the visualization element is coupled to a display unit.

15. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the elongate body further defines a lumen.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein off-axis articulation of the articulating element is configured to expose a distal opening of the lumen.

17. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the elongate body further defines a lumen, and wherein a distal opening of the lumen is exposed in the deployed configuration.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the distal opening is covered by the articulating element in the delivery configuration.

19. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a visualization element.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein off-axis articulation of the articulating element is configured to expose the visualization element.

21. The apparatus of claim 2 further comprising a light source configured to illuminate the interior of the body lumen and facilitate visualization with the visualization element.

22. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the elongate body further defines multiple lumens.

23. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a housing configured to couple the articulating element to the elongate body and to facilitate articulation of the articulating element.

24. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the housing comprises at least one linkage for articulating the articulating element.

25. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the visualization element comprises optics.

26. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the elongate body is steerable.

27. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the elongate body is rigidizable.

28. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the articulating element further comprises a steerable shaft.

29. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the articulating element further comprises a diagnostic or therapeutic tool.

30. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising an atraumatic tip.

31. A method for obtaining endoluminal access, the method comprising:

advancing an elongate body having an articulatable element disposed near or at a distal region thereof into a body lumen; and

articulating the articulatable element from a position in-line with or adjacent to a working axis of the elongate body to a position out-of-line with the working axis.

32. The method of claim 31, further comprising imaging within the body lumen with a visualization element disposed within or upon the articulatable element.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein imaging further comprises imaging stereoscopically.

34. The method of claim 31,wherein articulating the articulatable element comprises exposing a distal opening of at least one lumen defined within the elongate body.

35. The method of claim 34 further comprising advancing a tool through the lumen.

36. The method of claim 34 further comprising injecting or withdrawing a fluid through the lumen.

37. The method of claim 31, wherein articulating the articulatable element further comprises expanding the articulatable element from a reduced delivery configuration to an expanded deployed configuration.

38. The method of claim 31 further comprising repositioning the articulating element in-line with or adjacent to the working axis of the elongate body.

39. The method of claim 38 further comprising removing the elongate body from the body lumen.

40. The method of claim 38 further comprising manipulating the elongate body and re-articulating the articulatable element out-of-line with the working axis.

41. The method of claim 33, further comprising altering a focal depth during stereoscopic imaging.

42. The method of claim 31 further comprising steering the elongate body within the body lumen.

43. The method of claim 31 further comprising rigidizing the elongate body within the body lumen.

44. Apparatus for obtaining endoluminal access, the apparatus comprising:

a steerable guide having a working axis, at least one lumen and a distal region, the guide configured for insertion within the body lumen; and

an articulating element disposed near the distal region of the steerable guide,

wherein the articulating element is configured to articulate off-axis from the working axis of the elongate body.

45. The apparatus of claim 44, wherein the steerable guide is configured to steer the articulating element within the body lumen to facilitate access to regions of interest within the body lumen.

46. The apparatus of claim 44, wherein the articulating element comprises a distal region of the lumen.

47. The apparatus of claim 44, wherein the articulating element comprises a visualization element.

48. The apparatus of claim 44, wherein the articulating element further comprises a steerable shaft.

49. The apparatus of claim 44, wherein the articulating element comprises a diagnostic or therapeutic tool.

50. The apparatus of claim 44 further comprising an atraumatic tip.